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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 006867

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/08/2016

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SUBJECT: A CONVERSATION WITH PRD MORAL LEADER CUAUHTEMOC  
CARDENAS

REF: MEXICO 04987

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR CHARLES V. BARCLAY, REASONS  
: 1.4(B/D).

#### Summary

1. (C) On December 7, Poloffs met with PRD "moral leader" and founder and three time presidential candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas to get his perspective on the events leading up to Felipe Calderon's inauguration as president. Cardenas lamented the damage done to the PRD's public image by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's (AMLO) post-electoral protest tactics. He is optimistic that inter-party tensions will soon settle and that the PRD will start to negotiate with the PAN on much-needed reforms. Cardenas gives Calderon and his incipient presidency the benefit of the doubt and expects that with his superior political skills, he will be able to push reforms much further than Fox. End summary.

#### On the PRD

2. (C) Cardenas told poloffs that AMLO's protest tactics, specifically the two month long encampment in the Zocalo and on Mexico City's principal boulevard, as well as PRD legislators' successful effort to block former President Fox's State of the Nation speech on September 1 (ref A) and their unsuccessful attempt to block Calderon's December 1 swearing-in ceremony, have hurt the party's image. He feared that public dissatisfaction with the PRD would be reflected in next year's municipal and state legislative elections, as well as in the gubernatorial races in Yucatan and Baja California. Although inter-party tensions remain high, Cardenas is optimistic that the dust will settle "in a few weeks" and expects the PRD will start acting less like a protest movement and more like a normal opposition party. With regard to Marcelo Ebrard's recently inaugurated municipal administration in Mexico City (GDF), Cardenas thinks the new GDF will eventually have to recognize and work with Calderon. Speaking from his own experience as mayor of the city, he said it was impossible to run the city effectively without having a good relationship with the federal government.

#### On Calderon

13. (C) Cardenas offered Calderon the benefit of the doubt, expressing personal respect for the president and a cautiously optimistic prognosis for his administration. He said he had met Calderon on a few occasions, but does not know him very well. Overall, Cardenas' thinks the new president has both good intentions and the political skills to push reforms further than Fox did. With regard to Calderon's cabinet selections, he said that they represent the new president's "mold" or "ideology" and that there were no surprises. He suggested that Calderon get out of Mexico City and tour the country more. On policy, he thinks that security, creating jobs, and achieving real growth should be Calderon's main priorities.

Comment

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14. (C) There has never been much love lost between Cardenas and AMLO, and both Cardenas and his son Lazaro Cardenas Batel, Governor of Michoacan, were decidedly unsupportive of AMLO during the presidential campaign and post-election crisis. Both refused to join Lopez Obrador in his Zocalo rallies and other protests, and have also publicly recognized Felipe Calderon's triumph (despite AMLO's call for the contrary). Indeed, Cardenas, public criticism of AMLO's civil resistance tactics was the first public evidence of a deep fissure within the ranks of the PRD. Ildefonso Aguilar, a trusted advisor to Cardenas, told poloff earlier that Cardenas was on "stand-by" mode, waiting for AMLO's engine to run out of steam. Recently, however, Cardenas renounced his role to head the GOM Commission organizing the official observance of the Mexican revolution's centennial and the independence bicentennial in 2010, in order to "maintain

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party unity." Cardenas' move is likely a tactical decision to garner internal party support for his son Lazaro as the 2012 PRD presidential candidate.

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